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DOT Delivers Emergency Landing Zone Lights to 14 Rural Southeast Communities

(Juneau) – The Department of Transportation and Public Facilities in July delivered portable emergency landing zone lights to fourteen rural Southeast Alaska communities, which will help ensure that life flights will be better able to land in those villages for medical emergencies.

“These emergency light kits have been provided through a federal grant, by which our congressional delegation wanted to make sure every airport in Alaska has emergency medical access,” said DOT&PF Commissioner Mike Barton. “The grant has paid for emergency lighting for three rural airports, plus 43 landing zones for helicopters, which provide the lion’s share of the medivac flights, especially here in Southeast.

“We are particularly pleased to be part of the effort to make emergency medical evacuation landings safer. Given the weather conditions – fog, rain, wind – along with the long winter nights, a well-marked landing zone could be the difference between life and death in some cases. One of DOT’s desired outcomes is to save lives through more reliable transportation infrastructure. These lights are a key to making that outcome a reality.”

Each landing zone light kit consists of six lights developed for the military for use with night vision imaging equipment. The lights are powered by rechargeable batteries, which light them for about one hour. The kits have been delivered to the emergency medical service providers in each community, such as the local government, community council, or medical clinic, which will be their custodians.

The Southeast communities that received the equipment this summer are Coffman Cove, Craig, Elfin Cove, Hollis, Hydaburg, Kasaan, Metlakatla, Myers Chuck, Port Alexander, Point Baker, Port Protection, Tenakee Springs, Thorne Bay, and Whale Pass.

The initial federal grant was for \$2 million, and funded lighting projects in Southeast and a number of villages in the Bethel area. Barton said he hoped additional funding would become available that would allow for the purchase of emergency lights for more rural villages.

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